

Book reviews

Gillies and Dodds Bacteriology Illustrated. 5th ed. Revised by RR Gillies, 1984. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, and New York. Pp. 224. Price £15.

It has been a great pleasure for me, an Ulster graduate, to review a book admitted by the author himself to have a strong "Ulster-Scottish connection". To many microbiologists this is a well known textbook; the first edition was published in 1965 and we are now presented with the revised fifth edition. Although this book has retained its previous size and shape, like many medical publications it is now available in paperback only. It is well produced on good quality paper, however, which is essential for a publication that contains so many colour illustrations.

The book is divided into five sections: (1) The first four chapters describe the bacterial cell, covering its structure, physiology, and classification. The physical reactions between antigens, extracted from bacteria or their products, and antibodies are also described. (2) In the largest section many genera are dealt with systematically. The essential features of each genus are highlighted, and microscopical appearance, cultural characteristics, biochemical reactions, and serological properties are described. A résumé is given of the infections caused by the genus described. (3) The second largest section is titled "Diagnostic methods". Collection and transport of specimens are detailed, and flow charts are used to describe the processing of such specimens submitted to the laboratory. Bacterial sensitivity tests are illustrated, although in one instance the identification of contents of the antibiotic disc by referral to their colour was difficult as the relevant photograph was in black and white. This section concludes with a chapter on prophylactic immunisation. (4) This section, which was first included in the third edition, describes infections with protozoa and illustrates, where appropriate, their complex life cycles in man or animal hosts and in insect vectors. (5) The final section classifies the fungi and details the laboratory diagnosis of those pathogenic to man.

In a total of 224 pages this book contains a large amount of essential information, which is fully illustrated by many charts, diagrams, and excellent photographs. The latest edition has been updated to include organisms recently considered to be important in human infection such as

Legionella spp, *Campylobacter* spp, and *Clostridium difficile*. The standard of presentation is careful throughout and only the occasional error can be seen, for example when a table is incorrectly labelled.

This publication provides a good visual introduction to microbiology, which should be a help not only to students of medicine, but also to students in other disciplines. Where additional information is required a list of textbooks for further reading is provided.

M S Sprott

Dermatologies Clinique et Vénérologie. 2nd ed. By R Touraine and J Revuz, 1984. Masson, Paris. Pp 400 and 12 title pages, 150 illustrations in colour. Price not known.

This beautifully produced paperback pocket textbook follows the traditional lines of any European textbook on dermatology and its companion venereology, though the authors are up to date and call the latter "*maladies sexuellement transmissibles*". The book is aimed at undergraduates, and students who read it are in for a treat. It is succinctly written, with clear descriptions of disease and treatment. The quality of the illustrations is among the best I have ever seen.

Sexually transmitted diseases are discussed in a separate section. There is a clear exposition of their social implications, and it is typical that chancroid is called *chancres mou*, and lymphogranuloma venereum (LGV) *maladie de Nicholas Favre*. Rather illogically, sexually acquired reactive arthritis (SARA) is called *le syndrome de Reiter*.

References to candidosis, condyloma acuminatum, molluscum contagiosum, herpes genitalis, scabies (*gale*), and pediculosis pubis (*morpions*) are dotted around in the dermatological section. There is a really superb illustration of anal warts. Even the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (*syndrome d'immuno-dépression acquise*) is included.

Genital dermatoses are well described. The section on balanitis and its differential diagnosis is not only logically and didactically clear, but is adorned with two very good photographs of the condition, *balanitis—nappe érythémateuse, érosive, et suitante*. By the way, the main parts on dermatology are very good too.

Michael Waugh

Fracastoro's "Syphilis" Introduction, text, translation, notes, and a computer generated word index. By Geoffrey Eatough, 1984. Francis Cairns, Liverpool. Pp 295. Price £17.50.

This is a most scholarly work intended for classicists, neo-latinists, and students of the history of medicine. The author, a classicist, states in the preface that he makes no original contribution to this last subject. Although several writers in the last half century, most of whom are cited in this work, have made commentaries or bibliographies of Fracastoro's celebrated poem, this is the first attempt since Wynne-Finch (1935) to produce a commentary of the highest intellectual order on and translation of "Syphilis".

The book starts with an introduction. "Syphilis" is introduced as perhaps the most famous Renaissance Latin poem, not only giving its name to a disease that has altered the course of humanity but of which (quoting Baumgartner and Fulton, 1935) there have been over 100 editions translated into at least six languages. Fracastoro, apart from being a physician, was as far as any human being could be a perfect product of the Renaissance, for he was a mathematician, philosopher, and poet as well. Eatough describes the style of the poem as deceptive. "The language often echoes Virgil, sometimes Lucretius or Catullus". The introduction describes the role of Fracastoro in the world of his time and the rest of his works. It also gives a very good explanation of the early history of syphilis, quoting 180 references from a catholic list of authors from Luisinus (Venice 1566), including Fournier (Paris 1869), Bloch (Jena 1901), Sudhoff (Leipzig 1912), and Sir James Frazer (*The Golden Bough* 1927), to such celebrated modern writers as Hudson (1962) and Møller-Christensen (1965).

Then follows "Syphilis", the poem in three books. Syphilis, a shepherd, makes his appearance in line 288 of book III. The new cure for syphilis, guaiacum, is mentioned in line 404. After the poem in its original Latin and Eatough's English translation come 88 pages of notes on it, themselves a work of scholarship. A curious insight into the Renaissance mind is gained from a section dealing with extracts from poems and addresses to Fracastoro.

Lastly, there is a word index of 70 pages, which was worked out by a computer at University College Swansea. It includes all words that occur up to 42 times in "Syphilis".

The author is to be congratulated on performing such a mammoth task. This work will become part of the essential library of anyone who studies the history of medicine or the history of the sixteenth century.

Michael Waugh